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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TANGLED TREES

Trees, by Harold Monro. Poetry Bookshop, London.

Trees—the title makes me think of John Muir of happy memory, and his wonderful love of trees. It passed the love of brothers, it was a proud rapture of understanding, a mystic spiritual communion, like the intimacy of a mediaeval saint with archangels. Trees were his archangels, ranged in shining ranks about the throne of God; and mercifully gathering at their feet the races of men, and interceding for them with the Most High. From the little quivering aspen, tender as a fawn, to the *sequoia gigantea*, noble as a mountain, he knew them to their deepest secrets, and loved them in his deepest heart.

Well, Mr. Monro loves trees too, in his odd and ingenious way. He says:

Tree-life is like a corridor between
The Seen and the Unseen.

Indeed, he almost “makes of their love an immorality.”

Grip hard, become a root; so drive
Your muscles through the ground alive
That you'll be breaking from above your knees
Out into branches:

Thus he forces himself into tree-life. Then—

The trees throw up their singing leaves, and climb
Spray over spray. They break through Time.
Their roots lash through the clay. They lave
The earth, and wash along the ground.
They burst in green wave over wave,
Fly in a blossom of light foam:
Rank following windy rank they come.
They flood the plain,
Swill through the valley, top the mound,

Tangled Trees

Flow over the low hill,
Curl round
The bases of the mountain, fill
Their crevices, and stain
Their ridges green.

But the poet kept "too much mortality":

They drove me forth. The angry trees
Roared till I tumbled lean and lewd
Out of that Paradise. The forest rose
To scourge my wavering conscience, and pursued.

But, though driven forth, he—we—cannot escape them:

How beautifully they grow,
Crowding the brink of silence everywhere!

Yet they leave their proper place—

They follow us and haunt us. We must build
Houses of wood—

and fill them with "fragments of the forest"—chairs, tables,
doors, etc. Others we put to sleep under railroad tracks.

And some, some trees, before they die,
Carved and moulded small
Suddenly begin—
Oh, what a wild and windy woodland call
Out of the lips of the violin!

Such is the argument of this curiously subtle poem. Original it is, beyond question, and sometimes beautiful; but Mr. Monro's forest would be too uncanny, too sophisticated, for John Muir.

By way of moral we have a cryptic couplet at the end:

And you, be certain that you keep
Some memory of trees for sleep.

The book is a beautiful limited edition, all done by hand at the Temple Sheen Press. It has decorative wood-cuts—

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at least they look like old wood-cuts—by James Guthrie, the designs a clever cross between Blake and Morris. Why do they do these things so much better in England?

H. M.

STEPHENS' ROAD TO DUBLIN

The Rocky Road to Dublin, by James Stephens. Macmillan Co.

To sit down to review James Stephens is much like being asked to furnish a recipe for making star-dust, or to analyze the shivering beauty of the dawn. His work has the peculiarly Celtic quality of existing in space, completely divorced from the world as we know it. His beauty comes to us faintly, filtered through the simple words of every-day speech, which yet, as he writes them, are no longer the words we know, but subtle, delicate, shimmering things, full of gray undertones, swift flashes of silver humor and wisdom from some other world. To the many who love his work it is something beyond reason and analysis, something to be accepted joyfully, as wild flowers and meadow larks are accepted, and loved as instinctively.

This for instance, called *The Secret*:

I was frightened, for a wind
Crept along the grass to say
Something that was in my mind
Yesterday—

Something that I did not know
Could be found out by the wind,
I had buried it so low
In my mind.